***Holes***

***Chapter 6***

***Summary And Analysis:***

***Summary(4-6):***

Camp Green Lake is described to resemble a prison or work camp. The orange clothing that the boys are forced to wear sound almost identical to the kinds of uniforms worn by the inmates in many prisons. The digging of holes every day not only sounds tiring, but also alludes to digging graves. Mr. Sir presents a menacing physical presence and has a mean personality. Mr. Pendanski, on the other hand, seems to be a surprisingly kind presence at Camp Green Lake. The fact that the boys call him "mom" suggests that he is like a caring family member to them, and his desire for the other boys to help Stanley also supports this. Mr. Pendanski's explanation of Zero's name, however, suggests his potential meanness. If Mr. Pendanski truly wanted to help every boy on their way to a better life then it seems doubtful that he would dismiss Zero as a boy with no brains at all.

Stanley is not as tough as the other boys at Camp Green Lake are. While Stanley is innocent of the crime he was accused of, most of the other boys are there because they are guilty. Although the nature of their crimes are unknown, the sign outside of Mr. Sir's office, which prohibits weapons, suggests that violence may be second nature to many of the boys. Stanley consideration of this sign as obvious is a sign of his naivete. The fact that Armpit punches Stanley simply for calling him Theodore shows that the boys are not only tough but also unpredictable. This insistence on nicknames is a revealing trait of the boys at the camp. By refusing to be called by their given names, it seems that the boys are cutting themselves off from their lives outside the camp. This may be because they refuse to look back on the events that have led to their internment at the camp, or it may be a sign of control for them. The boys have all been forced to come to Camp Green Lake and once there they are told what to wear, when to wake up, what to eat, and forced to dig holes. By naming themselves they are capable of deciding on their own identity and differentiating themselves from every other boy who wears the same orange jumpsuit and digs the same holes every single day.

***Analysis(1-6):***

These first chapters recount the bus journey of [Stanley Yelnats IV](https://www.gradesaver.com/holes/study-guide/character-list#stanley-yelnats-iv) from his hometown in Texas to Camp Green Lake, a correctional facility for young criminal offenders. Stanley is an overweight and unlucky boy who was caught with a pair of sneakers belonging to a famous baseball player, who intended to auction them off for charity, and he has been sentenced to time at Camp Green Lake instead of in jail.

Despite this conviction, Stanley is innocent of the theft of which he has been accused, and actually - improbably - found the sneakers when they fell from the sky and into his hands. Since his father is an inventor working on a cure for foot odor, Stanley believes the sneakers are his "destiny," maybe even a "gift from God" that will signal a turn for the better in his family's unfortunate circumstances (24). Instead - and Stanley attributes this bad luck to a family curse - he is arrested and sent to Camp Green Lake to do his time and eventually be rehabilitated into society.

After a long and dusty bus ride, Stanley arrives in Camp Green Lake, which to his surprise is neither green nor near a lake. In fact, the camp consists of a couple of buildings in the middle of a vast dried lake basin, with nothing but desert for miles in every direction.

The first person who Stanley meets is [Mr. Sir](https://www.gradesaver.com/holes/study-guide/character-list#mr-sir), a rather abrasive official at the camp who tells him that he can try to run away if he wants, but that he will die of thirst and heat stroke before he gets to safety. Mr. Sir seems to have a relatively luxurious, lazy lifestyle in comparison with the boys at the camp, who eat disgusting food, sleep on smelly cots, and get a very limited amount of water to drink and to shower in.

[Mr. Pendanski](https://www.gradesaver.com/holes/study-guide/character-list#mr-pendanski), another counselor at the camp, helps Stanley settle into his new home: D tent, where he is introduced to his six tent-mates. All the boys at the camp go by strange nicknames like "Magnet," "[Zero](https://www.gradesaver.com/holes/study-guide/character-list#zero)," and "Armpit," and refuse to answer to their normal names. None of the other boys at Camp Green Lake believe that Stanley was arrested for stealing such a famous baseball player's shoes, and Stanley thinks it's funny that no one believed him back in the city when he said he *didn't*steal them.

The novel opens with a description of the harsh, unforgiving landscape that surrounds Camp Green Lake. This is apt because the setting plays such a large role in *Holes*. The harshness of the scenery mirrors the difficult conditions in which the boys live and work, and the fact that the vast desert serves as a way of keeping the inmates imprisoned without any guards or fences is very powerful, especially in light of Stanley and Zero's later attempt to escape.

The irony, of course, is that the camp is neither green nor by a lake, and this parallels the string of disillusionments and disappointments in the life of Stanley, the protagonist.

The description in the first chapter is set out in a very matter-of-fact way, letting the reader know how things stand and giving some insight into the power dynamics of the camp: "[The hammock] belongs to the Warden. [The Warden](https://www.gradesaver.com/holes/study-guide/character-list#the-warden) owns the shade" (3). The power relationships between the people in the camp are clear, which is important, because the abuse of power by adult authority figures over their adolescent wards is a key theme in the novel.

Any uncertainty in the setting comes from the unpredictable and often dangerous forces of nature that are at work in the desert landscape - Sachar notes that if you are bitten by a scorpion, you won't die, at least, not "usually" (4). However, the bite of a yellow-spotted lizard is fatal, and death is the only thing that allows campers to transcend the rules of the camp authority figures. If you get bitten by a lizard, Sachar writes, "you might as well go... lie in the hammock" because "[t]here is nothing anyone can do to you anymore" (4).

The tone of the first chapter is thus very intimidating, and we are provided with a clear depiction of Camp Green Lake and the forces that are at play in it: the perils of the scenery and the animals that inhabit it, and the strict authoritarianism of the camp counselors. Camp Green Lake keeps its young criminals in line through the double-headed tyranny of adults and nature.

The themes of inevitability, destiny, and bad luck are also introduced in this section, primarily in Chapter 6, during Stanley's account of the event that sent him to prison. A series of unfortunate events - Stanley is bullied, his books are dropped in the toilet, he misses the bus - coincide to put him in exactly the wrong place at the wrong time. More irony follows: the fall of the infamous pair of sneakers from the sky, which Stanley heralds as an act of God and "destiny" that will help his father's business and change his life for the better, ends up being the reason he is arrested and sent to Camp Green Lake (24). (Arguably, this is actually a good thing, given that Stanley going to Camp Green Lake is what eventually allows him to break the curse on his family, but in these opening chapters, it seems like a disaster.) Stanley just can't catch a break. Remarkably, this string of bad luck, which we learn stretches back for decades in the Yelnats family, is so well-known and accepted among the members of the family that they view it almost as "a family joke" and Stanley is able to smile at his misfortune (7). This is an example of someone who is strong in the face of hardship, and this sense of humor will serve Stanley well over his time at Camp Green Lake.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

Because of the scarcity of water, campers are only allowed to take cold four-minute showers. [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) uses his four minutes getting used to the water. At dinner, another camper asks Stanley what he did to end up at Camp Green Lake. The boy doesn't believe Stanley when he says he stole [Clyde Livingston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/clyde-livingston)'s sneakers. Stanley thinks it's funny that nobody believes anything he says about his "crime"—nobody believed him either when he said he didn't steal them.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The fact that nobody believes Stanley when he says anything about his crime reinforces the novel's insistence that the formal justice system is somewhat absurd; this suggests that the absurdity of Stanley's story essentially renders the justice system unable to function effectively.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Clyde "Sweet Feet" Livingston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/clyde-livingston) is a famous baseball player whom [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) idolized; he had a poster of him on his wall until the police took it away as evidence. When Stanley learned that Livingston would be at his hearing, he was excited to meet his hero. Livingston testified that he'd donated his shoes to raise money for a local homeless shelter. The worst part for Stanley was that Livingston stated that Stanley must be a horrible person to steal from homeless children. Stanley mulls this over as he carefully turns on his cot, hoping it won't collapse under his weight.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Stanley's optimism and positive outlook on life shines through when the narrator says he was excited to get to meet Clyde Livingston; it appears as though it's possibly part of the family curse when Livingston then calls Stanley a terrible person. This also shows how Livingston, who is wealthy and famous, feels as though he has the power to say this sort of thing to an innocent teenager.

***Summary Part 3:***

At school, a bully named [Derrick Dunne](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters) tormented [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats) regularly and the teachers did nothing. The day that Stanley was arrested, Derrick had dropped Stanley's notebook in the toilet. Poor Stanley missed the bus while he was fishing it out and was walking home from school when the sneakers fell from the sky. Stanley took it as a sign and raced home with the smelly shoes to [his father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-s-father), though he was arrested before he got home. He only found out later what the shoes were for and who they belonged to.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Again, that Stanley's first thought when the shoes fall from the sky is of his dad shows that even as Stanley is consistently bullied, he still has a good heart and wants to do nice things for others—the justice system just gets in the way. This shows up too when the teachers do nothing about Derrick's bullying.

***Summary Part 4:***

Because of [Clyde Livingston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/clyde-livingston)'s baseball schedule, the trial was delayed for more than a month. [Stanley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/holes/characters/stanley-yelnats)'s parents couldn't afford to hire a lawyer and this proved damning: the judge didn't believe the shoes fell from the sky. He suggested that Stanley agree to go to Camp Green Lake instead of prison and encouraged Stanley's parents to make a quick decision, saying that vacancies don't last long there.

***Analysis Part 4:***

When the judge pressures Stanley and his family into making a quick decision, it again shows how Stanley's family's poor economic standing disadvantages them. Being able to afford a lawyer would've meant that Stanley could've made a more informed decision.